



A REVIEW ON AHARA VIDHI VIDHANA WITH PRESENT ERA FOOD HABITS

Dr. Anjitha VS

PG Scholar, Department of Samhita Samskrita and Siddhanta, Government Ayurveda College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India.

ABSTRACT

Ahara, the most essential requirement of all living beings is looked upon by Ayurveda with great relevance in causation and treatment of disease. Ahara vidhi vidhana are the do's and don'ts regarding diet intake as food should be taken warm, unctuous, in due measure etc. In the present era, least importance is given to dietary rules which leads to impairment of digestive functions. Proper maintenance of digestive process depends upon ahara and method of its intake. The present era witnessing of alarming increase in lifestyle diseases due to irregular food habits need to be studied under the purview of ahara vidhi vidhana. The literary data collected from classical texts were reviewed for gathering information and the concept has been viewed with present era food habits. Ahara vidhi vidhana comprising what, when and how to take food are presented by acharyas as dietary and dining rules. Non-compliance of dietetic rules are the irregular eating habits noticed largely as the present era food habits. Thus complying to the dietetic rules as told in ahara vidhi vidhana can be applied for vikara prashamana in the form of pathya sevana and nidana parivarjana.

KEYWORDS: Ahara, Ahara vidhi vidhana, present era food habits.

INTRODUCTION:

Ayurveda, the science of life is holistic in its approach towards prevention and cure. The curative aspect is correcting the imbalance of doshas through the major constituents like ahara, vihara and oushadha. Ahara and vihara which cause disease, themselves produce the increase or decrease of doshas also. Among the rational ayurvedic treatment principles, nidana parivarjana like avoiding the causative factor is important in this era, as we witness alarmingly increasing lifestyle diseases. Ahara is the best preventive medicine and is solely responsible for the health and disease. Adequate emphasis is given in Ayurveda for the right way of taking food such as what, when and how to eat in an ordered way ensuring all the appropriate hygiene methods. There are many guidelines on rules of consumption of food in the name 'Aharavidhi' mentioned in ayurvedic classics which are the do's and don'ts regarding the diet. Acharya Charaka has comprehensively presented these rules in specific sequence under the title 'Aharavidhi vidhanam' which gives directives on food intake, as food should be taken warm, unctuous, in due measure etc¹. In the present era, dietary habits have changed drastically leading to the impairment of digestive functions. Irregular dietary habits leading to ama is the cause for many diseases particularly digestive disorders.

Food habits in present era has drastically changed from the diets of a few generations ago. Lifestyle is substantially changed with increased sedentary habits, which has direct impact on the individual's health. Dietary habits particularly focus on what people eat, how people eat and the way they eat. Nowadays, the diet pattern is mostly influenced by the western diet, which is linked to the lifestyle diseases such as obesity, type 2 Diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Fast food consumption has increased significantly as fast food industry is expanding at the rate of 40% every year. Ultra processed foods are increasingly prominent in the diets all over the world. Such global dietary changes are compatible with nutritional transition.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To collect and prepare data regarding dietary methods of food intake (Ahara vidhi Vidhana) documented in ayurvedic texts with their utility comprehending different classical texts and under the aspect of present era food habits.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The literary review data of ahara vidhi vidhana collected mainly from classical ayurvedic texts mainly Charaka Samhita, Susrutha Samhita, Ashtanga Sangraha and Kasyapa Samhita and relevant information were included. Data regarding present era food habits collected from international authorised data bases were considered for this purpose.

Ahara vidhi vidhana:

Ayurveda emphasizes dietary guidelines in particular apart from focussing the nutritional benefits of food components. Diet and dietetic rules are basic factors among the maintenance of health and cause for disease. These rules are specified for how to eat and when to eat, which is a swasthya aspect indicated for maintaining the wellness. While, there are many diseases in which ahara vidhi vidhana is mentioned as hetu. So the advice of pathyapathya sevana in the form of ahara vidhi Vidhana can help for vikara prashamana. Also in the curative aspect, Ahara dravya can be considered as dravya bhuta oushadhi and dietetic rules are adraya

bhuta oushadhi. Dietary rules to be accomplished while food intake are described below.

Ushnam asniyat:

Food should be eaten as warm and freshly prepared as the taste is relished better. Eating warm stimulates the digestive fire and helps for easy digestion. Consuming ushna ahara cause vata anulomana, pitta gets stimulated and thereby increase the power of digestion². The term " ushna " means the temperature of the food, not the potency of the food material. Food consumed should be not very hot and hence it can be taken as samyak ushna, the optimum. Consuming extreme opposites of ushna results in delirium, giddiness, irritation of tongue, throat, lips and palate, chest region and stomach. Further it diminishes the strength, alters the taste perception, suppurates the mouth, oral cavity and stomach, bleeding disorders, erysipelas, dehydration, fever and even severe diseases³. Atisheeta annam causes debility, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, horripilation, and constipation. It even leads to abdominal distension, inflammatory bowel diseases, respiratory symptoms like cough, hiccups and disorders of vata and kapha⁴. In contexts explaining about nidana of diseases, atiushna and atisheeta are described as ahara nidana for the dosha vitiation. Food which is cooked long before, cold and reheated is also prohibited. So it is the samyak ushna(warm) to be considered for the rules of diet intake.

Snigdham asniyat:

Consuming snigdha ahara causes anulomana of vata and secretes bodhaka kapha which aids for the taste, sneha stimulates the pitta and enhances the agni and digests the food quickly by stimulating the secretion of kledaka kapha⁵. Snigdha guna brings about moistness and softness of the food thereby promotes nourishment and complexion and provides strength and firmness to sensory organs. Snigdha dravya promotes madhura avasthapaka and increases the bala and which rejuvenates the body by delaying the ageing process. However extreme snigdha(atisnigdha) and asnigdha(rukshata) hampers the agni and disturbs the digestive process. Atisnigdha ahara delays the digestive process causing great increase of kapha and medas, thereby leading to excessive salivation, loss of taste, heaviness of heart, and disease of abdomen and throat⁶. And also dry food substances are avoided as it causes balavarna nasha, twak rukshata, vata, shakrit and mutra nirodha. The term snigdha includes Sneha dravyas like ghee, oil etc as well as godhuma, shali, rasa etc. Among nitya sheelina dravyas, it is advised to include ghee as only sneha in daily diet consumption to use as balanced diet⁷.

Matratvat and jeerne asniyat:

Food taken in proper quantity gets digested comfortably and bestows normalcy of dhatus. The amount of food taken without disturbing the equilibrium of doshas and dhatus of the body, gets digested as well as metabolized in proper time is regarded as proper quantity. Food eaten in such a way gets digested without any difficulty, helps for the easy elimination of fecal matter through guda marga and nourishes the body and mind⁸. Quantity of food is determined upon the digestive capacity and nature of the food substances. By following this principle, the diseases caused by the intake of improper quantity of food can be prevented. Appropriate quantity of food intake are known with the respective symptoms such as there should be no feeling of pressure of food on stomach, no interference in the proper functioning of hridaya, no pain in the flanks and no excessive heaviness in the abdomen. It does proper nourishment of the senses, relief from hunger

and thirst, feeling comfortable while doing all activities⁹. Thus by taking the appropriate quantity, there will be increase in strength, complexion and growth/development.

Improper quantity is either less or more. Food taken in deficient quantity is assessed with the following symptoms such as impairment of strength, complexion and nourishment, non satiety, affliction of body, mind and sense organs, perverted intellect, dhatu poshana is affected and it causes eighty varieties of vatika diseases. Food taken in excessive quantity causes the aggravation of all doshas instantly¹⁰.

Food should be taken only when the previous eaten meal is digested. If food is taken before the digestion of previous meal, the improperly digested ahara rasa of previous meal gets mixed up with the rasa of food ingested afterwards produces ama dosha and causes the aggravation of all doshas instantly. So, food should be taken after the digestion of previous food when doshas are situated at its proper location, agni is stimulated, appetite has developed, lightness of the body having thirst, orifices of srotas are open, belching is pure, normal functioning of hridaya, normal natural urges to expel body wastes and there should be enthusiasm¹¹. The presence of all the above conditions defines the proper ahara kala.

Virya aviruddham asniyat:

Viruddha ahara is the diet which disturbs the balance among the body elements or it is the combination of two substances which are not similar to each other¹². Food should be taken having no contradictory potencies. Eating food which are antagonistic in virya leads to various diseases such as kushta, andhatva, visarpa, grahani, amavisha and other rakta pradushtaja vyadhis¹³. This viruddha ahara is of several types with respect to place, time, power of digestion, doses, habit, dosha, mode of preparation, potency, bowel, state of health, order, cooking methods, combination, palatability, richness of quality and rule of eating.

Ishta deshe/ ishta sarvopakaranam asniyat:

Food should be taken in a clean hygienic place with appropriate accessories¹⁴. Even most wholesome food taken in appropriate quantity does not get digested properly due to worry, grief, fear, anger etc. These factors influence the mind as well as hygiene of the place. So it's obvious that for healthy food, healthy surrounding is required. Specific guidelines regarding the place of food preparation, the place for eating and the place where food should be kept before serving is noted. The place of eating should be neat and even and crowded places should be avoided to avoid mental distractions and spread of micro-organisms through contact. It should be in a secluded area free from troubles.

Na atidrutam, na ativilambhitam asniyat:

Food should not be taken too hurriedly nor too leisurely. Eating food too hurriedly makes food to enter into the wrong passage, does not move from there and gets located at improper place (does not enter stomach). Consuming food very fast does not allow to perceive the taste of food and cannot detect the foreign bodies mixed with them¹⁵. By eating this way, neither the good nor the bad qualities of food are known. Food eaten with hurry violates the normal route and food enters into the wrong passages as what seen in annaja hikka (hiccup). Food when eaten in hurry stimulates vata which misleads the food producing the symptoms like hiccup¹⁶. Due to the vimarga gamana of vata, agni is also affected thereby hindering the process of digestion.

Eating food very slowly tends to eat more food than usual and does not produce satiety. The temperature of food may get cold. All these factors hamper agni and the food is not digested properly. These two methods of diet intake is detrimental to health. Research on eating speed shows that eating quickly leads to poor digestion, increased weight gain and lower satisfaction. However slow eating shows better digestion, better hydration, easier weight loss or maintenance and greater satisfaction.

Ajalpan, ahasan asniyat, tanmana bhunjitam asniyat:

Food should be eaten without much talking and laughing. Food should be eaten with full concentration towards it as well as the eating process. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and food is eaten too hastily or too slowly. Talking or laughing during meals or not giving due attention causes the same symptoms as that of food eaten too hurriedly or leisurely¹⁷. The mental distractions showed overeating leading to obesity. While paying attention to a meal was linked to eating sufficient meal and lesser chances of gaining weight. Food intake was significantly enhanced with the presence of familial friends and with watching tv because both of these will draw attention away from the consumed food and can increase the food intake. If the concentration of mind during meals is such important for healthy people, it becomes more obligatory for the diseased ones.

Atmanam abhisameekshyam asniyat:

Atmanam means self and Abhisameekshya means properly assessed. There is uniqueness among each individual. The rules of ahara are told in general and they are definitely wholesome. But they should be only applied after consideration of oneself, that is after considering one's own constitution and capacity¹⁸. Analysing the food if it is conducive or harmful, one's own appetite and balanced diet is very important to maintain the health. An adaptive form of eating termed as intuitive

eating pattern relies upon internal body signals known as interoceptive awareness is an emerging approach to eating behavior supports this concept. An intuitive eating style focuses on eating motivated by physical reasons, relying upon connection with and understanding of physical hunger and satiety cues, rather than on emotional or environmental motivators. It has shown its importance in promoting healthy dietary practices and improving physical and emotional health outcomes.

DISCUSSION:

Ahara vidhi vidhana includes the methods and rules of food intake, which are the do's and don'ts of diet intake with respect to dietary and dining rules. Deviated dietary rules like irregular eating habits such as irregular eating habits, eating before digestion, eating food excessively, eating dry, hard and cold food items, foods which are heavy to digest, mental distractions and psychological factors can harm the digestive process leading to the formation of ama (metabolic error), thereby causing disorders of immunological, digestive and metabolic origin¹⁹. Food habits of present era has drastically changed, where the diet pattern is influenced by western diet due to increased production of processed foods, rapid urbanization and lifestyle changes. Due to busy life schedules, eating cold and reheated food items for the convenience is mostly followed against the rule, ushnam asniyat. Reheating foods prepared before long time or refrigerated foods can destroy the nutrients in food and sometimes even cause food poisoning and food borne diseases. According to the CDC, more than 70% of the sodium are from the frozen meals which are increasing the susceptibility to hypertension. Mono sodium glutamate containing in most frozen foods have harmful side effects rising more concerns to the health. Consuming excessive unctuous and dry foods are against the dietetic methods of snigdham asniyat. Of this concern, most foods like bakery snacks, deep fried foods, maida contained biscuit and bread stuffs, spicy foods and alcohol consumption are highly used. Diet high in fats increases the risk to cardiovascular diseases.

Now eating habits has changed that by a shorter eating duration, by eating irregularly and by skipping meals. Skipping meals lead to binge eating, over-indulging and excessive snacking. Skipping breakfast at morning and eating mid morning unhealthy, high calorie snacks is becoming the habit of IT professionals. Moreover skipping breakfast tend to overconsume the latter meals of the day which are against the dietetic methods of matravat and jeerne asniyat. Due to very busy schedules, eating too fast without chewing the food properly results in heartburn and indigestion. Another set of young generation eat food while on the phone or watching tv without knowing the stomach level. So they eat without considering own body hunger and satiety. Untimely eating habits can produce a disruption in the circadian system that might lead to unhealthy consequences. Excess workload, long commutes, lack of appetite, unappealing food, dieting gives rise to untimely eating habits. Disruption in circadian rhythms have been linked to chronic health conditions like obesity, diabetes, dyslipidemia, sleep disorders and so on. Virya viruddha is the use of combination of shita and ushna virya substances like fish and milk, meat and curd, sour fruits and milk. Such food combinations are harmful imparting its untoward effects on immune system, cellular metabolism and growth hormones. Viruddha ahara induces inflammatory effect at a molecular level causing agni mandya, ama and metabolic disorders. Consumption of highly deep fried foods and preparations with milk and egg, milk and sour juices and cooking with reheated oils are common nowadays. Such wrong food combinations deteriorate the body tissues by creating immunological imbalance.

Hygienic as well as good psychological condition is maintained during meals. The hygiene at the place of eating is important to avoid microbial contamination of food and its diseases. Some materials are highly contraindicated to use for specific foods such as sour foods should not be kept in copper utensils as the chemical reaction produces poison like substances and leads to many disorders as like use of hot foods wrapping with low grade plastic covers. Eating at restaurants, eating on the run, eating take away foods as well as eating while working are a part of dietary habits of today which are against ishta deshe asniyat and ishta sarvopakaranam asniyat.

Due to busy schedules of this time, people tend to eat food very fast by standing sometimes. Eating food very slowly watching tv or mobile phone tends to eat more leading to overeating. Due to very busy schedules, eating too fast without chewing the food properly results in heartburn and indigestion. Another set of young generation eat food while on the phone or watching tv without knowing the stomach level are followed against the dietetic methods of nati drutam and nati vilambhitam asniyat.

The mental distractions showed overeating leading to obesity. While paying attention to a meal was linked to eating sufficient meal and lesser chances of gaining weight. Food intake was significantly enhanced with the presence of familial friends indulging in talk and laugh and with watching tv because both of these will draw attention away from the consumed food and can increase the food intake. Changing dietary patterns exposing to different cuisine types is seen with today's world. Our society is open to the world market than of previous times, experiencing different cultures in terms of food in particular is on mode now. Moreover various fasting diet practice is raging into diet methods are against the dietetic methods of atmanam abhisameekshyam asniyat.

CONCLUSION:

In the present era witnessing lifestyle diseases due to the irregular food habits is a major global concern which need to be sorted out with appropriate preventive strategies. Deviation of dietetic rules is observed as an improper dietary habits happening from the sedentary lifestyle habits. Ahara vidhi vidhana can be applied for vikara prashamana in the form of pathya sevana and nidana parivarjana.

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